

## Shiloh, TN, April 2017, After Action Report

I think I just now have the energy to sit down and put some thoughts down in regards to Shiloh, as I was exhausted after the event. I'll go into more detail in a post on the Grand Armies of the Republic page about noting all the logistics and pre-planning done by the event staff (Earl Zeckman and John Nash Jr), and the (not kidding, 2 site visits and (by my count) 8 conference calls led by the overall commander Bob A Minton who did an amazing job at getting this event pulled together.

I arrived on Wednesday and was greeted by Terri Cooney Zeckman working the registration table. After setting up on site we worked through a pretty windy and rainy Wednesday and Thursday, but by Friday things were starting to shape up for some great weather. We had most of the company, battalion and brigade leaders on site by early Friday afternoon so we met to discuss the schedule for the weekend. I enjoyed camping next to 1st Battalion Steve Lundburgh who was great to work with all weekend.

I was honored to command all the infantry for the Friday afternoon battle, and we had three battalions that, while never worked together as a brigade, performed beyond expectations. 2nd Battalion 4th Company Captain Ryan VanMaldegen was tasked with being the bait of the scenario and led his company in drill in the field. One the attack unfolded he was joined by 3rd Company Captain Douglas McComas. Eventually the battle unfolded with the 1st Battalion (led by the fierce Colonel Dave Brunner) and Federal Calvary coming to our aid. The Confederates didn't put up too much of a fight so we opted to retire off the field.

Saturday morning's battle started off early with a 6:00a First Call. This battle was in two parts with us initially marching out with some interesting fog and deploying on the hill. As we covered for the rest of Army retreating behind us, our 1st Brigade fought a very stubborn delaying action allowing the rest of the Army to reform in the next field where the battle continued. Excellent work by Brian Riley and Aaron Sayles on the 1st Battalion Right Wing as well as Captain William Behrman of the 2nd Battalion 2nd Company.

On Saturday afternoon, we performed Brigade Drill which was something we don't get to do very often. I must say all the Battalion and Company Officers did a GREAT job with this drill. There were 5 or 6 specific things I wanted to do in terms of deploying and forming and we got those down so quickly, there was no reason to make it last any longer. (I only deployed our column of Battalions incorrectly one time...one time only....pretty sure no one noticed except Ian Fulford. 1st Battalion 2nd Company Greg Kohn was great to work with on this drill.

Saturday afternoon had a delay but it was due to the incredible number of spectators coming for the event. In part, these are the folks that pay the bills and I for one supported the delay in order to allow more of them to come see the event. The battle had an impressive display of artillery. After the battle, Lt. Colonel Jesse Poe led a patrol into the town of Purdy which was something we don't get to do very often. It was right after the delayed battle so I know the guys were tired but thank you.

I made the mistake of staying to long (or maybe going at all?) to the 3rd Michigan Infantry Co. F's camp where someone hit the 'on' button for Gary Houghtaling. I was also supplied green liquid and for the rest of Saturday night there was probably as much fog in my head as there was on the battlefield Saturday morning.

The Sunday battle had us march into the farthest corner of the battle field to stage. Our battalion kicked off the fight with an initial assault. A few observations here...the men of 1st Battalion looked amazing. I really saw Lt. Colonels Howard Morgan and Ted Opran do a fantastic job. I commented to Dave that their battle line was as straight as a ruler. Jason Andrew Brunner was great as 1st Company Commander, setting the pace, all the companies looked fantastic. (In a national event, what better place than 1st company, 1st Battalion??) I had to dispatch Marty Walker to the middle of the field to act independently, and he did a great job not just during the Sunday battle, but all weekend 'appearing' right in front of me when I needed him most and figuring out my hand signals. Our final push drove the Rebels from the field and we marched back to camp.

Compliments to 2nd Battalion Sgt. Major John Vohlken for his excellent work on the Guard Mount (several commented to me on it), and to Thomas Berlucchi, my Chief of Staff who I could not have done the event without. TJ Berlucchi filled in for drumming at several formations and did a great job as well, and last, thanks to my 'bugle translator' Tom Emmerick, for keeping me honest to the bugle calls for 1st Brigade.

I appreciate all of you did your part except one group who left about one cord of wood stacked in the middle of the field (because, you know, I didn't communicate expectations there...). Having said that, there was no trash to speak of in our camping area, so thank you for that as well as minding the 'no fire pit' request.)

I expected nothing less than excellence from the Indiana and Michigan boys in terms of their performance as I work with them regularly, but it was my first time with the MDM and KATs in 1st Battalion and they were hands down an amazing group of guys to march with who are well led and well trained. The other company officers I didn't already mention, Todd Koster, Jeff Cordell, Todd Wisnant Matt Mallory, thank you.

I am grateful for all of your hard work. (If I mixed up any company numbers / names here please let me know).

Hope my voice comes back soon....

Colonel Van